

## AFE / TPR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What are the duties of this committee?**

#### Mandatory:

- Perform and document peer classroom observations (1x per year)
- Compose end-of-year annual faculty evaluation (spring)

#### Optional (note: any revision must be approved in a formal department vote):

- Revise student or faculty evaluation instrument
- Revise AFE committee by-laws

### **What guidelines should I use in the peer observation?**

The English department has traditionally emphasized formative (descriptive) evaluations over summative (numeric, standardized) evaluations. Therefore, you should try to describe the teaching activities of your peer using specific examples. Do not feel compelled to use the letter grades on the form, though some instructors prefer them. (You can ask them in the pre-observation interview.)

### **What if I have serious concerns about an instructor I observe?**

You should discuss them with the instructor and, if you aren't satisfied, with the head of the AFE committee or the department head. One of them may suggest possible actions the instructor might take and can help you decide whether and how to express your concerns on paper.

### **What's the peer observation process? How do I decide which of an instructor's classes to observe? How should I behave in class?**

Once you are assigned an instructor to observe, you should contact him or her immediately. Depending on your schedules, you can determine whether to observe in the fall or spring. Many find peer observation stressful, so, as long as your schedule allows it, let the instructor choose the course and the day for you to observe. You'll need to schedule a pre-observation interview before the peer observation. Here are some other tips for a successful evaluation process:

- Communicate. Let the instructor know if you can't make the observation, and tell him or her when she can expect a copy of your notes.
- Try to be inconspicuous. The instructor may choose to introduce you or call on you, but you should not seek to participate in class. Arrive on time and stay for the whole class period. Avoid any actions, sounds, or facial expressions that instructor or students might try to construe.
- Consider a post-observation session to explain your observations or ask questions about what you observed.
- Be thorough—ask instructors for course materials, syllabus, or even student papers so that you can base your comments on all aspects of their teaching, not just their “stage presence.”

### **What do I do with the evaluation sheet?**

Keep one copy, and give one copy to the instructor. Make sure the instructor initials both copies. No one else should see this form, unless the instructor decides to make it public or use it for a tenure or promotion application.

### **What's involved in the end-of-year evaluation?**

Every instructor has to write a self-statement in the spring. Once that's in, usually in April, you write the Annual Faculty Evaluation of the instructors you observed. This evaluation is in paragraph form, usually no more than half a page, and addresses the instructor's Teaching, Research, and Service. As evidence, you can use your peer observation, other teaching materials, the annual self-statement, and the latest student evaluation forms (get them from Nancy). Since negative comments are at least as likely to work against faculty as positive comments are to work in their favor, try to use positive or at least neutral language in the paragraph itself, unless the committee chair or department head suggests otherwise. When you've finished, email your paragraph to the head of the committee.

### **How is all this information used?**

When we have raise money available, the department head uses the Annual Faculty Evaluation to rank faculty and recommend raises. Faculty can use positive observations in their tenure and promotion files. The personnel committee also uses the annual faculty evaluation paragraph in tenure, promotion, reappointment, and post-tenure review decisions.

**THE JARGON:  
WHAT ARE THE SEVEN DIMENSIONS OF TEACHING?**

This language is not our fault. It was handed down to us from some senate-appointed committee. This is how the Faculty Handbook explains the criteria you are supposed to use on the peer observation form (note that the list is supposed to be considered “illustrative” rather than “exhaustive”):

**Content Expertise:** Instructor displays adequate knowledge of the subject. According to Arreola (1995), content expertise includes the "body of skills, competencies, and knowledge in a specific subject area in which the faculty member has received advanced experience, training, or education" (p. 19)

**Instructional Delivery Skills:** Instructor communicates information clearly; creates environments conducive to learning; uses an appropriate variety of teaching methods.

**Instructional Design Skills:** Instructor designs course objectives, syllabi, materials, activities, and learning experiences that are conducive to student learning.

**Course Management Skills.** Instructor gives timely feedback to students; makes effective use of class time; handles classroom dynamics, interactions, and problematic situations effectively (e.g., academic dishonesty, tardiness, etc.)

**Evaluation of Students:** Instructor designs assessment procedures appropriate to course objectives; ensures fairness in student evaluation and grading; provides adequate constructive feedback on student work

**Faculty/Student Relationships:** Instructor displays a positive attitude toward students; shows concern for students by being approachable and available; presents an appropriate level of intellectual challenge along with sufficient support for student learning; has respect for diversity

**Facilitation of Student Learning:** Instructor maintains high academic standards; prepares students for professional work and development; facilitates student achievement; provides audiences for student work.